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A
SHORT ACCOUNT
OF A
SOCIETY
AT AMSTERDAM

Instituted in the Year 1767

FOR THE RECOVERY^{NS.}
OF DROWNED PERSONS;
WITH OBSERVATIONS

Shewing the Utility and Advantage that would accrue
to GREAT BRITAIN from a similar Institution

EXTENDED TO

CASES OF SUFFOCATION BY DAMPS IN MINES,
CHOAKING, STRANGLING, STIFLING,
AND OTHER ACCIDENTS:

By ALEXANDER JOHNSON, M. D.

L O N D O N:

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES



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A
SHORT ACCOUNT
OF A
SOCIETY

FOR THE
Recovery of DROWNED PERSONS,
AND FOR
Such as are Suffocated by DAMPS in
MINES, or seemingly deprived of
Life, by STIFLING, STRANGLING,
and other Accidents.

OF the various Institutions formed
for the Welfare of Mankind, none
appear more worthy of attention, than
those that are calculated for Preserving
the Human Species. In the year 1767 a
few wealthy Gentlemen of the City of
Amsterdam,

Amsterdam, struck with the variety of instances in which persons falling into the water were lost for want of proper treatment, when brought on shore, formed themselves into a Society *for the Recovery of Drowned Persons*. These Gentlemen have pursued their design with so much zeal and success, that in the space of four years they had the satisfaction to find, that in not less than a Hundred and Fifty cases, drowned persons were recovered by the means pointed out by them and recommended in the United Provinces by advertisements and other publications. Their First Object was, to inform the common people, as well as the inferior practisers of physic, in what manner to treat a person apparently lifeless: and their Second, was to animate them by proper rewards to pursue the methods recommended.

In the Instructions published upon that occasion, they gave caution, in the
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first place, to forbear from practices very common in most countries ; such as rolling the body over a cask ; tying it up by the legs, with the head downwards ; and all other rough usage, intended to disgorge water, vulgarly imagined to be swallowed by the drowned person. And they directed, first, to force air into the body, either at the mouth, or up the intestines ; recommending the stimulating vapour of tobacco as more efficacious than common air : and, in the next place, to strip off the wet clothes ; and as soon as possible, to apply external heat to the body, by means of fire, of friction with flannel cloths, or the natural warmth of two persons in bed, taking the body between them. They directed rubbing the body all over, especially along the backbone, with woollen cloths wetted with brandy, and strewed over with dry salt ; and the chaffing the temples with a volatile spirit, and holding the same to the nose.

The Rewards published by them for attempting the recovery of a drowned person, were the sum of Six Ducats, or a Gold Medal, over and above all expences attending the same, not exceeding Four Ducats.

The great success of this undertaking, and the advantages accruing from it to the State, has induced each of the several Provinces of the Republic of the Low Countries to take proper measures for extending the benefits of it, by enjoining an observance of the Society's directions through their respective districts.

The salutary effects of this institution are now no longer confined to the United Provinces——*The Boards of Health* at Venice, at Milan and Padua, have adopted it——The City of Hamburgh has done the same——The Empress of Russia has countenanced it in her dominions——The Empress Queen of Hungary has given very particular encouragement to it——And in

France

France it is at this time under consideration, by what means it may best be united with the general police of the kingdom.

It is a matter worthy of observation, that till the year 1767, the discovery of the proper means of bringing Drowned Persons to life, has not been made; and that hardly any other attempts have been made, but such as are suggested, at a time of confusion and distress, by ignorant people who for the most part are greatly misled by the unhappy prejudices prevailing in this matter.

It is true, that the world has been indebted to Dr. *Lecat*, Dr. *Van Engelen*, and Dr. *Gummer*, for Treatises upon this Subject, prior to the institution of this Society; and that, since that time, Dr. *Vicentini*, at Venice; Professor *Maggioni*, at Padua; Dr. *Reymarus*, at Hamburgh; Dr. *Stolte*, at Groningen; and Dr. *De Villiers*, at Paris, beside Dr. *Bicker's* Additions to Dr. *Tissot's* *Avis au Peuple*, have thrown out very useful hints upon the subject.

The several Cases published and described in the Memoirs of the Dutch Society, sufficiently prove the advantages arising from an observance of the Rules of that Institution. It appears from those Cases, that persons of all ages, from two years old to seventy-two, have been recovered, though apparently dead when brought on shore; that many persons have been restored, who have been immersed from fifteen minutes to an hour and a half; and in such instances as nothing less than the most indisputable testimony would render credible. It is found by experience, that relief may be given, not only in drowning, where it has been usual to despair of it; but in other cases, such as Suffocation by Sulphurous Vapours*; in cases of Strangling, Stifling, and in many apparent deaths by Cold, Hunger, and other causes.

* By an order of the Queen of Hungary, persons suffocated by Damps in her Mines, are treated in a particular manner, according to Instructions, and have been recovered.

From

From what has been already said, it is much to be wished, that some means may be found of giving the benefit of this valuable Institution to Great Britain and its Colonies.

If the number of accidents is proportioned to the number of persons employed on the water, this kingdom is more interested than any other nation, in the art of restoring drowned persons. The large coal-mines in Great Britain, where numbers of men are yearly destroyed by the *damps*, which are so commonly fatal to the miners, and the frequent instances of persons who come to an untimely end, by strangling, and other casualties, render the art of restoring suffocated and strangled persons to life, of great consequence to the community.

The author of this account flatters himself that the subject of it is worthy of attention, and shall think himself happy if his design of promoting an Institution

in Great Britain, with some Improvement upon those adopted in the neighbouring nations, in order to which he has already taken some steps, shall meet with general countenance and approbation.

The following Cases, amongst many others equally interesting, and well attested, are published in the Society's Account of the success of its undertaking, and have been admitted as claims for the promised rewards; though it is apparent the Society's Instructions have not been properly complied with in point of Treatment.

AT Dort in Holland, in the month of July, 1768, it happened that a boy of six years old, at play on a wharf, fell from a beam into the water, unnoticed by his playfellows, who, when they missed him, ran up to the road to seek for him: but a younger child, not yet fit to play with the others, and who at some little distance

distance had seen him fall in, and stood staring for a time as struck with amazement, ran home to tell of this accident; and at that very moment met its father, who was just returned from the Province of *Zealand*. This unexpected circumstance diverted the child from its purpose for a while; but as soon as a moment's quiet succeeded to the great expressions of joy in the family, the little child took the opportunity to make them understand, by broken words and signs, that somebody was fallen into the water, and led them to the place where it happened; upon which, immediate search being made, the boy was found, and taken out, dead to all appearance, after having remained for so considerable a time under water. He was carried home, was undressed, had some tobacco-smoke blown up his intestines, and was put into warm blankets, in which he gave some faint signs of life, crying when the soles of his feet were tickled,

but without any other certain symptom. After many more trials, his mother took him into bed to her, and by rubbing and cheering him all night, got him to a state of perfect recovery. The steady perseverance in this treatment is remarkable by its being carried on for a space of time not less than twelve hours, and gives room to the surgeon, *Jan Van Hespel*, who relates the case, to utter this exclamation : —“ Who knows in how many thousand
 “ persons the remaining spark of life is
 “ extinguished by injudicious practices !
 “ when speedy and proper endeavours
 “ might restore a sufficient degree of
 “ genial heat.”

AT *Amsterdam*, on the 17th of April, 1769,
Anna Woertman, a woman of twenty-seven years of age, belonging to that pleasant part of the city called the *Plantage*, was taken out of the water, without its being known how long she had lain in it. She was inconsiderately

fiderately rolled upon a float, for a quarter
 of an hour, and is said to have voided a good
 deal of water. She was then carried into
 a house, where *Bernardus Donselaar*, an apo-
 thecary, was sent for, and told she had just
 before given some very faint sign of life;
 though in fact she appeared quite lifeless,
 was stiff, and had green and blue spots all over
 her body.—She was laid before a fire in
 blankets, and rubbed with a mixture of
 spirit of *Sal Ammoniac* and Essence of
 Rosemary, along the back bone, the loins,
 the neck, the head and temples, and a
 stone jug with hot water was laid at her
 feet. Some farther signs of life then ap-
 pearing, she began to shake as in the cold
 fit of an ague, spake and complained;
 upon which some spoonfuls of Jeneva
 were given her, and she was blooded—her
 blood was black and thick, not inflamed.
 Being thirsty, some milk and water was
 given her; and then she fell into fits seem-
 ingly strong enough to carry her off: these
 however

however were removed by a cordial administered to her. In the space of four hours and a half she was so much better, as to be carried home, and put to bed to her sister, where she fell into a breathing sweat. About five hours afterwards she complained of a great oppression, and a violent pain in all her limbs; for which an aperient laxative mixture was given, and which made her part with a quantity of watery matter. The pain augmenting, and fixing in her side and breast, she was twice bled, and her blood being then found much inflamed, it was wished to repeat the bleedings; but she proved to be too weak: however, a blister was applied to her side; and other treatment being opportunely given, she was entirely recovered in the space of a fortnight, the slowness of which is attributed to her having been afflicted six months before with a fever, and constant lowness of spirits, upon account of bad circumstances.

AS the sailors were busy lowering the yards and handing the sails, on board a Dutch man of war, the *Orange Nassau Weilburg*, lying before Leghorn, on the 18th of April, 1771, one of them, *Gerrit van Driebergen*, a man of forty-one years of age, fell overboard, unnoticed. The jobb of work they had to do being ended, some of the men on the larboard side saw a body floating upon the water, with its face downwards, and its head immerfed: they at first thought it to be a corpse from another man of war, the *Zierikzee*, lying not far from them; but as soon as they discovered it was one of their own hands, two men, lashed with ropes, let themselves down, got hold of him, and brought him up into the ship. He had then lain about half an hour in the sea, and seemed as dead as possible. Nevertheless the surgeon of the ship, *Jan Nicolaas Flietner*, undertook the trial, whether life could be restored to him: he had him carried into the fore-castle,

castle, laid before the fire, stripped, and had dry clothes put on : he tried to bleed him, without effect; and he farther used the means directed to be employed on shore, and with equal success; for in half an hour's time he began to puke and evacuate; and his blood beginning to circulate, in half an hour more, about eight ounces of it were by degrees got from the orifice at first made. He was then put to bed, continued to be rubbed, and as he gathered warmth he had some convulsive motions in his arms and face. Ten ounces of blood, then taken from him, caused a second puking and evacuation, which composed him, and he fell asleep. In the night he seemed delirious; but in the morning he was sensible and better, yet very weak and feverish. He was then ordered to drink a good deal of limonade; and with some farther care, in a few days, he recovered gradually, and became fit for duty again with the rest of the crew.

